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EXPERIMENT STATION FILE

FARM YOUTH EXERCISE THEIR FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

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SUMMARY

This circular has been compiled to enable extension workers to help farm young people choose more wisely. It is concerned primarily with the managerial or the thinking phases of these young people - the logic of the situations they face and the natural consequences that follow.

Capacity to choose is one of the characteristics that differentiate man from all other living creatures. In mankind this capacity is present in its highest development. Thus he is enabled to become far more responsible for his choice than any other creatures. The use of this capacity to choose gives farm young people an unusual opportunity to determine what the outcome of their life plan shall be.

Life is just one choice after another. The oftener decisions are made for individuals the less such individuals will develop this human characteristic. Farm young people learn to choose by choosing. Through extension work an effort is made to supplement the training received on the farm and in the home by increasing their skill in making more satisfying choices. Among the important choices facing farm young people today are; (1) What vocation to follow; (2) whether to farm or not; (3) what kind of farm home will they ultimately want to set up.

If the life plan of these young people is to be realized, both wise choices and the ability to put them into action are required.

FARM YOUNG PEOPLE ARE CONTINUALLY CHOOSING

In a democratic society human beings are left free to choose. To a large extent they can determine in what environment they will live and what in that environment they will make a part of their lives. The farmer determines in what fields his animals will pasture and how they will be housed and fed, but young people determine from occupations available the one by which they will earn their living; also whether they will be most active in the church, in school affairs, in drama, music, or any civic

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affairs. Their life plans are influenced not only by their environment, but by what they choose from that environment.

Whenever a young man in carrying on his corn enterprises comes to the point where he must determine what variety of corn to plant, he has to consider a number of options in selecting his seed stock. Whether or not to use the same variety he used in the past, the one he saw on the demonstration plat, the one his neighbor grows, or the hybrid variety offered by his seed dealer.

If the extension program has been effective, it will aid him in deciding what variety of corn to grow. Since farm young people are concerned with a number of choices or optional situations in connection with every farm and home operation, extension work is attempting to develop the ability of these young people to choose more accurately when they arrive at decision points in their farming and homemaking.

MANIPULATION VERSUS MANAGERIAL ABILITY - CHOOSING

Action is the result either of conscious choosing and or of sufficient drive, urge, or feeling of anticipated satisfaction to lead to activity. Through extension work an attempt is being made to develop two different kinds of ability as base for action: (1) Skill in manipulation (motor ability), and (2) skill in thinking (managerial ability). When an attempt is made to teach a young man a better method of pruning his fruit trees, he is shown the correct method of removing the limb and how to handle his saw more effectively by the expenditure of less energy (motor ability). He is taught also how to choose the limbs to be removed and the type of tree to work for through his pruning operations (managerial ability). Similarly, in culling poultry, this young man can be taught how to hold the hen and make the various physical tests (motor ability). He is aided also in deciding what his system of poultry management will be - whether or not to adopt the practice of culling poultry several times each year (managerial ability). The first kind of ability is primarily manipulative, the second is managerial. A review of the entire category of farming and homemaking operations would disclose that one or the other of these two types of ability is involved in them all.

In homemaking the dressing and feeding of young children involves manipulative skill, whereas the planning their wardrobe and diet involves managerial skill. Refinishing the kitchen table requires motor skill, primarily, whereas reorganization of the kitchen equipment requires managerial ability. Manipulative skills can become habits and serve their function effectively. Managerial skills require conscious thinking, the exercise of judgment, and the ability to put decisions into action.

Much of the work required in farming and homemaking is done in a routine, fixed manner in accordance with habits personally developed. Generally these habits become highly standardized and are subject to little change.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOME OF THE CHOICES THAT FACE HIM

Many factors or influences have to be considered in making choices. The person making the choice has to take into consideration or weigh all these factors and their effect to enable him to arrive at correct choices or decisions.

Though a child does not choose its parents, it begins quickly to react to its environment and determine what and when it will eat, when and how much it will sleep. The parents, as part of the child's environment, determine child's activities and set the pattern of how it will meet similar situations in the future. As the child grows older it should become more and more independent of its parents; its choices should be more the result of its own initiative. Maximum development will not be reached unless the child is allowed to exercise this capacity.

A large part of this training in thinking should consist in using various experiences to build up patterns with reference to the individual's future farm and home. Everyone has an ambition for himself - a life plan or scheme that determines in a large way his individual actions.

This plan or pattern may be dominated by the desire to accumulate money, to get an education, to attain physical comfort, to maintain a successful family life, to serve others, or to develop a certain type of character. All these elements may be part of a person's pattern, but the relative importance to him may vary widely. His evaluation will determine to a large degree his action under certain circumstances. This pattern may not have been given much conscious thought, but it motivates choices and decisions just as effectively as though thought had been given to it. Most persons who have succeeded in life have had a conscious plan or goal and have worked persistently toward it. If an individual is to become a successful farmer or homemaker, this same persistence in striving for some goal must be part of his makeup. Determination to earn a living and make a home through farming requires a clear idea of the most profitable system of farming under local conditions.

As life evolves, drives, urges, and emotions change along with the environment in which a person finds himself. When young people have reached the stage in their life cycle when they leave school, their choices are dominated by certain factors not previously present. On leaving school one generally must decide how to earn a living, also what kind of home one wants and the kind of life partner likely to make that home a success.

After young people marry, their interests center more and more on their own home and family.

Choices are important in shaping one's life, whether they be made after all factors have been given serious consideration or thoughtlessly. One's goal in life is attained through sound choices made along the route and persistent striving for this goal.

CHOOSING FARMING AS A VOCATION

Being born on a farm does not give a person inherent qualities for successful farming. Farm young people are just as anxious to receive information that will enable them to make the best vocational choice as are children of parents engaged in other occupations. Success in a vocation depends largely on the native capacities of the persons concerned and their application in an occupation where they will be the most effective. Most farm young people are faced with the question of whether to farm or not.

Some farm boys and girls, to the same extent as the children of parents in other occupations, lack the qualities that make for success in farming. Therefore, in choosing farming as an occupation, they need to consider what personality traits, individual capacities, and likes and dislikes might cause them to succeed or fail.

One's life is shaped by the consequences of one's choices. In some cases the consequences may not turn out as anticipated. Choices may be based upon emotions that have been misguided. An unfounded prejudice against farming may lead to the choice of an occupation for which one is poorly qualified.

Unfortunately, too little is known about the human factors conducive to success in farming, but the young man who dislikes animals, does not handle a horse gently, has difficulty in doing his task on time, and does not like to work in the "dirt" should stop to consider whether to farm or not. Even though he might inherit a farm free of debt, if he does not like farming, he should question whether or not he is making the best use of his life by attempting to make his living from the farm. The more familiar he is with the traits of successful farmers in his neighborhood and the more he tries to make these traits his habits, the greater will be his chances of success.

CHOOSING A FARM TO OPERATE

If a young man decides to take up farming, the choice of the road he is to travel is fairly definite. Generally, as soon as farm young people have chosen farming as their life work, they begin, if they have not already done so, to plan to rent or buy a farm, or to work out a partnership agreement with their parents. With this aim in mind, they are confronted with questions such as (1) what kind of home life do they ultimately want to enjoy, (2) what are the farming requirements necessary to meet these home needs, (3) what type of farming will it require, (4) what size of business will be necessary, (5) would it be better to buy or rent, (6) where and how can the necessary capital be obtained. Very few young men start farming on an independently owned farm. In certain areas, if a young man purchases too small a farm, expansion either by purchasing another farm or by renting additional land may be difficult.

Taking title to a farm for the purpose of making it the major source of income and a place to make a home generally is done once in a lifetime; all available sources of information should be used before putting this important decision into action.

THE CHANGING AGRICULTURAL WORLD AS A FACTOR IN CHOOSING

Economic and social changes require that a person not only consider what has happened in the past but how his present situation differs from past situations and how his future is likely to be affected. Present-day young people have to consider their situation with reference not only to their own lives but to the world in which they will operate in the future. Farming today is different from that of 50 years ago, and farming in the next generation will be different from that of today.

In no large area in the United States is farming carried on with the same combination of enterprises or with the same technique as it was 50 to 75 years ago. Since dairying has been a part of the agriculture of the North Atlantic region of the United States for over 100 years, an analysis of some of the changes that have taken place in dairying might show how extensive and significant these changes have been. Fifty to seventy-five years ago practically all cows were milked by hand. The milk was taken into the house and made into butter and cheese by the farm family. Frequently the butter or cheese was marketed directly to the ultimate consumer. The feed used in this type of farming was raised on the farm, the power being furnished by horses also raised on the farm and fed with home-grown feeds.

At present cows are milked either by power from gasoline engine or electric plant. Milk is cooled in an electric refrigerator. It is placed on a platform where it is collected by an organization that puts it through all the necessary processes from the time it is taken from the platform until it reaches the ultimate consumer. In other words, a large number of the processes of converting the products of the soil, through dairying, into a form for use by the ultimate consumer, have been transferred from the farm family to another plant and another group of persons.

Farm young people have to determine how to adjust themselves to these changes from the past in such a way as to gain the most out of their future environment. The young man choosing the dairy farm as a way to earn a livelihood is confronted with the same basic choices or decisions as those his grandfather had to make, but the optional situations from which he will have to choose, have changed.

CHOOSING THROUGH GROUP ACTION

When a farmer plants his cotton, his wheat, his tobacco, the number of acres he uses has an effect not only on the total supply in the country but upon the amount available for export. His willingness to join with others in adjusting his acreage may affect the welfare not only of the other growers but of the whole nation. The unified action of a group can often bring about marked benefits to the group member.

If an individual is to choose wisely as a member of such a group he should have access to all the information upon which the group's action is based. He will develop his ability to improve his group decisions by actively and intelligently sharing in the making of such decisions regarding policies affecting his business. Generally the pooled judgment of the group members is wiser than individual judgment alone.

Freedom to choose indicates the type of society or group of which he is a part. The individual member has as much responsibility for group decisions as for his individual decisions. The more group activities they participate in the better qualified they will be to make group decisions.

CHOOSING TO MAKE A HOME ON A FARM

The occupations of farming and farm homemaking are intimately connected. Therefore, for the young woman who chooses a farmer as a life partner not only choice of a husband but consideration of his occupation is involved. In many other professions the occupation of the husband and home life have relatively little to do with each other, but on the farm they are of necessity each a part of the other. The young woman needs to be as much concerned about her ability to succeed under farm homemaking conditions as is the young man in the choice of farming as an occupation. If she likes a home in the wide-open spaces, or to get away from the crowd and noise and be part of an independent business, she might find more happiness on a farm than in a city. A young woman who does not like to handle a broody hen, who is neither inclined to have meals ready on time nor enough interest to discuss the farm operations intelligently, might find homemaking on the farm uncongenial.

Other factors such as age, schooling, ancestral background, and religious beliefs have to be considered, but occupational congeniality plays a more important part in married life on a farm than in married life in any other occupation. The greater number of common interests the greater the possibility of a successful happy married life. In every community successful farm homes can be found. A study of the family life in these farm homes will reveal many of the required mutual interests.

CHOOSING THE TYPE OF HOME TOWARD WHICH TO LOOK FORWARD

Homemaking choices and decisions often result in serious consequences. Often they hinge on the allotment of cash funds available for living to certain phases of homemaking. When the available funds are limited, whatever adjustment is made has an important bearing not only on the phase to which the funds are assigned, but on all the other phases. For example, if, in relation to actual needs, a very limited amount of money is assigned to food, either the farm will have to produce an abundance or food standards will have to be sacrificed. In turn, the choices made in the allotment of money to food together with the extent of farm

production will control the kind of meals that can be planned. If the garden and other enterprises are not planned to meet nutritional requirements, well-balanced meals cannot be served unless funds are available to purchase food to take care of the deficiencies.

If too much out of the clothing budget is allotted to one member of the family, the other members will have to sacrifice their clothing standards, or if too much is allotted to clothing the family, the expenditures for such things as health, education, and recreation will have to be reduced.

If young people have not learned to make financial adjustments, they will have difficulty in keeping the cash outgo for the farm and the home within the family income. Many a title to a farm has been lost because this difficulty has not been foreseen, or if recognized, there was an unwillingness to make the necessary adjustments.

IMPROVING ONE'S ABILITY TO CHOOSE

The more that farm young people observe, read, study, and discuss, the more likelihood there will be of exercising good judgment. However, information without training in the ability to use it is not effective. Words, arguments, and agreements prove nothing in themselves. Whenever possible choices or decisions should be formulated and tested or verified in actual situations. It is the test in real situations that determines the soundness of the choice or decision. Even though a practice may have proved sound at an experiment station, the local test or demonstration is necessary to verify its adaptability to local conditions.

The oftener choices are made for young people the less skill they will develop to choose wisely when confronted later with similar situations. If a young man does not learn to use his time to advantage before beginning to operate a farm on his own account, he will have difficulty with himself when he starts. If a young woman never has had an opportunity to manage money before marriage, she will have difficulty in adjusting her budget when she sets up a home of her own.

Many of the choices that farm young people have to make have been studied by the agricultural experiment stations, and data have been obtained to guide the judgment of these young people. Studies of crop varieties, control of diseases and pests, and rations for livestock have been made, and answers obtained that are effective guides. The results of other types of choices can be studied locally. The results observed should improve the judgment of the young people concerned.

Certain choices are followed by certain consequences. If, for example, Rosen rye is sown, the same variety of rye will be harvested. If smutty wheat is used, the resultant crop will be smutty also. If too much of the available funds for living is spent for clothes, other parts of the living will suffer accordingly.

There is a sequence in choices. The selection of seed corn comes before planting in fact and should be considered in thinking. Choice of the occupation one desires to enter should be studied before entering upon apprenticeship training in the occupation. The effect of subordinate decisions is influenced by the choices that precede them. It does not matter how well a steer is fed if it is of a type that will not take on fat readily, or how much effort is put into the preparation of the soil and its cultivation if good seed stock is not used - the end product will not be satisfactory.

The sounder the pattern or plan is thought out the greater are the chances for success. If a person cannot see the relationship between his plan and the situations involving that plan, the soundness of the pattern is of little consequence. If his cropping system depletes the soil fertility he will fail. Poor farm or home practices will destroy the value of the best system of farm or home management. Similarly, unwillingness to sacrifice for a basic education may defeat the individual's ambition to enter a profession. Excessive expenditures for an automobile may bring about failure to own a farm or a home that one has planned.

To live a satisfactory life one must have thought out an objective that will utilize to the maximum one's native capacities and have chosen along the way the things that will make that objective a reality.

DISTRIBUTION.--A copy of this circular has been sent to each extension worker and to each agricultural-college library and experiment-station library.

